

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
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SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 IO-13 DHA-02
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P R 081535Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2644

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 0764

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, ET, SU, SO, UR

SUBJ: THE NEW ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT -- AN ANALYSIS

SUMMARY: NOW THAT MENGISTU HAS OPENLY TAKEN OVER PMAC
REINS, HIS FIRST TASKS WILL BE TO RECONSTITUTE DIRG MORE
NEARLY IN ACCORD WITH HIS OWN WISHES AND TO IMPLEMENT
HIS OBVIOUS DESIRE FOR MORE DRASTIC MEASURES AGAINST
ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (EPRP). ALTHOUGH
ADDIS ABABA IS CALM FOR MOMENT, NEW WAVE OF ARRESTS AND
VIOLENCE IS QUITE POSSIBLE BEFORE LONG. AT SAME TIME,
EMBASSY DOES NOT ANTICIPATE RADICAL POLICY DEPARTURES
FROM EXISTING REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM, DESPITE MENGISTU'S
INDICATIONS THAT PACE WILL BE ACCELERATED. IN FOREIGN
POLICY FIELD, EPMG LIKELY TO SEEK BLACK AFRICAN SUPPORT
FOR ERITREAN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. FOR MOMENT,
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EPMG ALSO SOFT-PEDALING ITS DIFFERENCES WITH SOMALIA
FOR REASONS WHICH, THOUGH NOT YET CLEAR, MAY BE RE-
LATED TO GREATER SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN ETHIOPIAN
DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY.

1. AFTER LAST WEEK'S PURGE, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT
MENGISTU IS RIDING HIGHER THAN EVER BEFORE. IF THERE

IS ANY LEADING FIGURE WHO COULD FORM NEW POLE OF OPPOSITION TO HIM REMAINING WITHIN DIRG, HE IS NOT YET APPARENT TO THIS EMBASSY. MENGISTU'S FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS IS TO PUT DIRG BACK TOGETHER AND FILL IN GAPS, MOST PROMINENT OF WHICH IS THAT OF CHIEF OF STATE. PMAC MEETING SCHEDULED FOR FEB 7 PROBABLY GRAPPLED WITH THAT VERY PROBLEM. FROM WHAT WE KNOW OF HIS PAST PREFERENCES, IT IS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN THAT HE WILL DECIDE TO ASSUME PMAC CHAIRMAN ROLE HIMSELF. IN THAT RESPECT TEFERI BANTE SERVED USEFUL PURPOSE IN RELIEVING HIM OF CEREMONIAL DUTIES AND PUBLIC EXPOSURE TO THOSE (LIKE WESTERN ENVOYS) MENGISTU DID NOT PARTICULARLY WANT TO SEE. THUS A NEW TITULAR HEAD OF STATE MAKES MUCH SENSE. IN ANY EVENT, WHAT MENGISTU DECIDES IS CERTAIN AT THIS POINT TO BE RUBBER-STAMPED BY REMAINDER OF PMAC, SINCE OPEN DISAGREEMENT HAS PROVEN CLEARLY UNHEALTHY.

2. WHILE DIRG TOP RANKS HAVE BEEN DECIMATED IN LAST DAYS, AND DEATH OF POMOA VICE-CHAIRMAN SENAYE LIKKE ALSO NO DOUBT GLADDENED RPRP HEARTS, EPRP IN LONG RUN HAS MOST TO LOSE FROM SHAKE-UP. THOSE IN PMAC FAVORING ACCOMMODATION WITH EPRP ARE GONE, AND MENGISTU WILL SURELY LAUNCH STRONG CRACKDOWN AIMED AT HARD EPRP CORE POSSIBLY SWEEPING UP IN PROCESS MANY NON-AFFILIATED SYMPATHIZERS OF EPRP GOALS AND SOME INNOCENT BYSTANDERS. ON OTHER HAND, SOME WERE ALREADY COUNTING EPRP OUT LATE LAST FALL, ONLY TO SEE RESURGENCE OVER PAST TEN DAYS OF EPRP-INSPIRED ASSASSINATIONS, ANTI-GOVERNMENT

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INCIDENTS, AND LEAFLET DISTRIBUTION. SUCH ACTIVITIES ARE BOUND TO CONTINUE, AND MENGISTU MUST REALIZE THAT, AFTER HIS ACTIONS OF PAST WEEK HE IS MORE A A MARKED MAN THAN EVER, WITH HAILE FIDA ALSO HIGH ON MOST WANTED LIST, AND NOT ONLY IN EYES OF THEIR ENEMIES IN EPRP. AT A TIME WHEN SUMMARY JUSTICE IS BEING DEALT OUT, HOWEVER, CLANDESTINE ACTIVITY LIKELY TO DECLINE FOR NEXT WEEK OR SO, WHILE BOTH SIDES DEVISE NEW STRATEGIES.

3. SOME OBSERVERS VIEW PURGE IN TERMS OF HARDLINER VERSUS MODERATE STRUGGLE. WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE THAT LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT SEVEN KILLED WERE ANY LESS DEDICATED THAN THOSE REMAINING TO CARRYING OUT NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION PROGRAM, ALTHOUGH IN PROPOSING ONE MORE ATTEMPT TO BRING EPRP BACK INTO FOLD, THEY MAY HAVE BEEN CASTING ABOUT FOR MORE PRAGMATIC SOLUTIONS TO CURRENT DIRG PROBLEMS. PURGE MAY ALSO HAVE REMOVED SOME OF BRAKES ON DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, BUT WE

DOUBT THAT EPMG COURSE WILL BE RADICALLY CHANGED AS
RESULT. MENGISTU'S FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENTS IMPLY THAT
PACE OF REVOLUTION TO ACCELERATE, BUT WE DO NOT SEE
NATIONAL POLITICAL PART EMERGING ANY FASTER FOR EX-
AMPLE, AND EPMG HAS NO GREATER MEANS THIS WEEK THAN
LAST TO STEP UP OFFENSIVE AGAINST ITS MILITARY
ENEMIES, DESPITE ITS BRAVE TALK ABOUT ARMING MASSES AND
TRIBUTES TO MEN IN UNIFORM. ONE LIKELIHOOD IS THAT
POLITBURO WILL REGAIN INFLUENCE IT APPEARED TO HAVE
LOST AS RESULT DEC 29 GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURE. THERE
ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT PURGE MAY RESULT IN THINNING OF
RANKS IN CABINET MINISTRIES AND ELSEWHERE IN BUREAU-
CRACY, BUT SO FAR ONLY ARRESTS THAT SEEM FAIRLY CERTAIN
ARE THOSE OF TESFAYE TADESSA, PERMANENT SECRETARY IN
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, AND TEFERRA SHAWEL, PRESS
CHIEF AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHOSE CRIME APPEARS TO HAVE
BEEN THEIR PARTICIPATION IN DRAFTING OF TEFERI BANTE
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JAN 29 SPEECH, WHICH SOFT-PEDALED EPRP.

4. FUTURE ROLE OF SECOND VICE-CHAIRMAN ATNAFU ABATE
IS LIKEWISE NOT CLEAR. RUMORS HAVE ALWAYS ABOUNDED OF
STRONG ANIMOSITY BETWEEN HIM AND MENGISTU. ATNAFU IS
CONSIDERED A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS OPPONENT, BUT HE IS
NOT KNOWN AS AMBITIOUS MAN, AND HE HAS SERVED USEFUL
PURPOSE OF ORGANIZING PEASANTS' MILITIA THROUGHOUT
COUNTRY, A PROGRAM WHICH APPEARS TO FIGURE LARGELY IN
MENGISTU'S THINKING ON RALLYING COUNTRY TO OPPOSE
ENEMIES OF REVOLUTION. FACT ATNAFU IS STILL ALIVE
AND GOING ABOUT NORMAL ACTIVITIES INDICATES THAT HE
IS OBVIOUSLY NOT CONSIDERED IN SAME THREATENING CATE-
GORY AS THOSE PURGED. HIS PRESENCE MAY THUS PROVIDE
SOME VESTIGE OF RESPECTABILITY TO MENGISTU'S NEW
GOVERNMENT, SO LONG AS HE TOES LINE.

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2645
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
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AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY SANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 0764

5. FOREIGN POLICY REFERENCES IN MENGISTU'S SPEECH
LEAD US TO BELIEVE THAT HE WILL ACTIVELY SEEK BLACK
AFRICAN SOLIDARITY ON TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY ISSUE IN
ERITREA AND PRESS ARAB CONSPIRACY CHARGES EVEN MORE
ACTIVELY THAN HERETOFORE. MENGISTU'S STATEMENT THAT
"EXCEPT FOR PDRY, MOTHER ETHIOPIA DOES NOT HAVE A
SINGLE REVOLUTIONARY FRIEND IN THE REGION*" ADOPTS
BELIGERENT STANCE TOWARDS ALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES,
INCLUDING KENYA. THIS STANCE, COUPLED WITH OAU SITE
PROBLEM AND EPMG'S FAILURE TO TEND TO ITS FENCES WITH
SUB-SAHARAN, AFRICA IN GENERAL, WOULD TEND TO WEAKEN
ETHIOPIA'S NEOGITATING POSITION. IT IS ALSO NOT CLEAR WHY BOTH
MENGISTU IN HIS FEB 4 SPEECH AND MEDIA SINCE HAVE
ALMOST ENTIRELY ELIMINATED DEROGATORY REFERENCE TO
SOMALIA AND SIAD BARRE. WHILE THIS MAY SIMPLY MEAN
RECOGNITION ON MENGISTU'S PART THAT ETHIOPIA HAS
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ENOUGH IMMEDIATE TROUBLES IN COUNTRY AND TO NORTH,
WITHOUT PICKING YET ANOTHER FIGHT WITH SOMALIA, THIS
ASPECT NEVERTHELESS BEARS WATCHING, GIVEN GROWING
INDICATIONS THAT SOVIETS MAY HAVE DECIDED TO TRY TO
PLAY MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN ETHIOPIA WITHOUT DISRUPTING
THEIR CLOSE ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMALIA. SOME
ADDIS OBSERVERS ARE ALREADY SPECULATING THAT APPARENT
DOWNPLAY OF RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA INDICATES SOVIETS
ARE DOING JUST THAT.

6. CRAV EN PROCESSION OF SOVIET, CUBAN, AND OTHER
EAST EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS TO PRAISE MENGISTU'S
ACTIONS AND OFFER SUPPORT FOR RUMP GOVERNMENT INDI-
CATES GREATER DEGREE OF COMMITMENT BY SOVBLOC TO

MENGISTU ONE-MAN SHOW THAN TO COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP OF PAST. AMBASSADORS MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN IN HURRY TO DISPEL ANY SUSPICIONS LURKING IN MENGISTU'S MIND THAT THEY MAY HAVE HAD CLOSE PAST CONTACTS WITH ONE OR ANOTHER OF SEVEN EXECUTED PMAC LEADERS. ALTHOUGH CHANCES OF PMAC UNDER MENGISTU SURVIVING SEEM AT LEAST QUESTIONABLE, SOVS MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT HIS IS KIND OF GOVERNMENT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THIS COUNTRY AND THAT THEIR SUPPORT IS NEEDED AT THIS JUNCTURE IF IT IS TO HAVE A CHANCE. ON OTHER HAND WEEK'S EVENTS WILL BE VIEWED IN ARAB WORLD AS GRAPHIC CONFIRMATION OF GROWING SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN, AND IMPETUS BEHIND, ETHIOPIAN POLICY, THEREBY ENHANCING ARAB RESOLVE TO SALVAGE AT LEAST AN INDEPENDENT ERITREA FROM AN INCREASINGLY HOSTILE AND PRO-SOVIET ETHIOPIA. FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE IT IS SURPRISING THAT SOVIET UNION APPEARS TO BE WILLING TO RISK TAKING ON PRACTICALLY ENTIRE ARAB WORLD ON AN ISSUE WHOSE REWARDS IN TERMS OF OVEALL SOVIET POLICY IN HORN OF AFRICA ARE NOT ALL THAT OBVIOUS.

7. RECENT POLITICAL EVENTS HAVE COINCIDED WITH
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RELATIVE LULL IN MILITARY OPERATIONS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY. HEAVY FIGHTING APPARENTLY CONTINUES AROUND ELABERET AGRICULTURAL ESTATES IN ERITREA (ASMARA 0084), AND 15TH BATTALION AT NACFA IS AS BELEAGUERED AS EVER, BUT SITUATION ALONG SUDAN BORDER HAS NOT WORSENERD SINCE LOSS OF HUMERA TO EDU AND OM HAGER TO ELF IN JANUARY. INCENTIVES FOR RENEWED MILITARY PUSH ON ALL DISSIDENT FRONTS WILL PROBABLY BE GREATER THAN EVER, HOWEVER, IF PURGE IS PERCEIVED AS WEAKENING DIRG AND HAVING FURTHER ADVERSE EFFECT ON MORALE OF ETHIOPIAN ARMED FORCES.
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